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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 KHARTOUM 001215

SIPDIS, NOFORN

DEPARTMENT FOR A/S FRAZER, S/E WILLIAMSON, AND AF/SPG  
NSC FOR PITTMAN AND HUDSON  
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (GARBLED TEXT, CAPTION)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/11/2018  
TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPKO](#) [UN](#) [AU](#) [SU](#)  
SUBJECT: SE WILLIAMSON'S VISIT TO ABYEI AND AGOK

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Classified By: CDA Alberto M. Fernandez, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary: SE Williamson visited Abyei and Agok on August 10. UNMIS security, civil affairs, and force protection officers based at UNMIS headquarters in Abyei town who were present during the heavy fighting in mid-May provided an account of events. They suggested that more troops and armored personnel carriers and better-planned troop rotations would help UNMIS better respond to future crises in Abyei. The leadership of the Joint Integrated Unit (JIU) told SE Williamson that they are under-equipped and need additional support both from their national armies and from UNMIS. The JIU is able to deploy everywhere except Agok, where the SPLA still maintains an ill-disciplined police unit that has not withdrawn. The JIU leadership had just met with the SAF 31st brigade at Difra, which promised to vacate the Abyei disputed area entirely within one week. The leader of the new Joint Integrated Police Unit (JIPU) described progress in deployment (142 officers out of an expected 400 total,) but urged that civilians not return to Abyei town until all bodies and unexploded ordinance are removed. In Agok, the UN Resident Coordinator and humanitarian NGOs described their work supporting the approximately 50,000 IDPs who fled the fighting in May, and SE Williamson met with a group of Ngok Dinka IDP community leaders to hear their concerns regarding SAF-supported Misseriya militias and the destruction of Abyei town by looters when the latter was under SAF control. End summary.

UNMIS  
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12. (C) UNMIS Security Chief for Abyei Richard Hoff, Civilian Affairs Officer Tom Sidebottom, and TCC Deputy Sector Commander Hinyambwe provided an overview of recent developments in Abyei since the signing of the June 8 roadmap. UN Mine Action has removed some unexploded ordinance. The SAF 31st brigade has withdrawn fully from Abyei town, although some of this brigade remains at Difra, 40 kilometers north of Abyei town, which is within the disputed borders of Abyei. The JIUs are taking control of Abyei town and the JIPUs are in the process of deploying. The civilian interim administration has been announced, although it has not yet assumed its functions.

13. (C) SE Williamson requested an account of the events in mid-May and the UNMIS response. UNMIS officers stated that when the fighting started, there was a leadership void in

Abyei generally and UNMIS was not at full strength (normally 200 Zambian contingent force protection troops) due to a troop rotation. Regarding the leadership in Abyei, NISS chief Col Faizal Faris was not present, nor were JIU BG Valentino and the SAF 31st brigade BG. The SPLM representative in Abyei, Edward Lino, also was not present. Therefore the key individuals who could have prevented an escalation in fighting were not on the scene. Moreover, before the fighting began, UNMIS was not allowed to patrol north or south of Abyei town. Hoff stated that once fighting began on May 13, as chief of security he made a decision to bring all UN and INGO staff into the UNMIS camp. UNMIS went to UNDP to evacuate staff and bring them into the UNMIS compound. Most civilians immediately fled Abyei town; however UNMIS provided sanctuary to both 60 Misseriya civilians who fled the fighting, as well as to a group of Dinka who visited the town led by Edward Lino after the fighting started. Hoff said UNMIS was able to leave the compound the first two days of fighting to assist UN and INGO staff, but was prevented from leaving the compound by the SAF in subsequent days when there was heavy fighting followed by generalized looting. Hoff and Hinyambwe stated that following the May 20 ceasefire, UNMIS attempted to recover bodies, and on two occasions was fired on by the SAF. To avoid direct conflict with either army, UNMIS force protection made a decision not to return fire. SE Williamson pointed out that nothing was done to stop the looting and burning of the town after May 20. The UNMIS officers did not dispute this, but pointed out that the town was controlled entirely by the SAF, which did not allow UNMIS to leave its compound.

14. (C/NF) SE Williamson asked the UNMIS officers what could be done differently and what additional tools or deployments could assist UNMIS operations in Abyei. Williamson pointed out that 200 troops in the most tense area of the North-South border, out of a force strength of 10,000 for UNMIS, seemed

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insufficient. Hoff and Hinyambwe readily agreed, indicating that 600 to 800 troops along with additional Armored Personnel Carriers (APCs) would be more appropriate. In addition, Hoff suggested that when troops rotate, it should be in "tailgate" fashion, so that one group arrives at the time of departure of the other group. Hoff stated that at the time of the crisis, there were not even enough troops to man the barriers around the compound.

NISS  
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15. (C) National Intelligence Service (NISS) Colonel Faizal Faris told SE Williamson that the situation in Abyei has improved since the signing of the Abyei roadmap on June 8. Security arrangements have held, and on July 26 the last members of the SAF 31st brigade left the town. Faris and JIU commander BG Valentino had just met with the SAF 31st brigade the morning of August 10 at Difra, and the SAF 31st brigade commander had promised to depart Difra within one week. The JIUs are functioning well and training together (and are co-located, unlike the JIU unit that was deployed prior to the fighting in May) and are deployed as far north as Todak and as far south as Manyang. The JIPU has begun to deploy in Abyei town under the leadership of Col. Luka Deng, a southerner deployed from the national police in Khartoum. The police unit of 75 officers that was sent by Khartoum last month, but was not accepted by the SPLM, has departed and returned to Muglad. The JIU and the JIPU are not able to deploy in Agok due to the presence of SPLA police there. Faris said that JIU BG Valentino has the respect of both to SAF and SPLA troops, but there are significant material needs for the JIU's (described in detail by BG Valentino below). SE Williamson asked what could be done better to prevent another round of fighting, to which Faris replied that it was the lack of implementation of the Abyei Protocol that led to the last round of fighting, thus the appointment of a

civilian administration is good news. Faris also said the budget for Abyei should be approved and signed expeditiously, and UNMIS should establish team sites in Difra and Agok, not just in Abyei town.

JIU and JIPU

16. (SBU) JIU commander BG Valentino and deputy commander LTC Ali Abdallah al-Nil described the deployment of the new JIU, with 300 soldiers co-located in the same camps. Ten days of joint training conducted by an Indian contingent of UNMIS was a success. Valentino and al-Nil explained that the JIUs report to the Joint Defense Board (JDB). Both officers confirmed that the soldiers selected for the current JIU are better than the last ones. However, there are significant challenges to a successful deployment. First, salaries are paid separately by each army and this creates morale problems for the soldiers. Second, although the Presidency has stated that the Abyei JIU will be an example for all other JIUs, it does not have adequate materials and equipment including tents, communications, vehicles, and other logistics. Valentino said that the only vehicles the JIU in Abyei currently has at its disposal are four old SPLA vehicles provided by the SPLA. Valentino said the JIU has not been able to deploy in many locations in the bush including Balom due to a lack of materials. Valentino concurred with other interlocutors that civilians should not return immediately as there are still bodies and unexploded ordinance in and around the town. SE Williamson encouraged Valentino and al-Nil to demonstrate that North and South can be integrated, and create an environment of stability that will provide an example beyond Abyei. The SE asked what the US and international community could do to help, and Valentino replied that assistance with equipment as well as implementation of the Abyei roadmap are critical. Valentino requested that the US contact the JDB chair and the JIU commander to request that equipment be sent to the Abyei JIU.

17. (SBU) JIPU commander Luka Deng told SE Williamson that eventually there will be 400 officers deployed in Abyei, but as of now there are only 100 officers from the South and 42 from the North. He said there are more coming from the North ("sons of the area who are from the national police,") but they are currently in specialized training. Deng said the southern officers already have specialized police training and skills. Deng said that training for the current 142 police would start the following day, August 11. Deng urged

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that civilians not return to Abyei town until the bodies and unexploded ordinance had been cleared, and said he had met with the ICRC deputy in Khartoum to make this point. SE Williamson expressed his appreciation for Deng's leadership and acknowledged the challenges that he will face.

Agok

18. (U) Jason Matus of the UN Resident Coordinator's office described for SE Williamson the range of assistance activities that have been organized for the estimated 50,000 - 60,000 IDPs in the Abyei area. Matus noted that in addition to these potential returns, there are an estimated 150,000 Ngok Dinka from the Abyei area who were already outside and waiting to return before the conflict in May. Moreover, 10,000 of the IDPs had just returned to Abyei for the census before the fighting, so they have gone from an urban environment to a rural environment to their current status as IDPs. Matus urged that reconstruction begin immediately, adding that it should include town planning and road construction. He called not only for international assistance but also diplomatic support to ensure that the GNU and GOSS dedicate funding to reconstruction efforts. Matus said the UN would provide \$10 million in recovery funding, but this would not substitute for Sudanese government

support, and he urged that the UN should not be viewed as the primary service provider. NGO representatives provided updates on food, water, health, and child protection assistance.

¶9. (U) Ngok Dinka IDP representatives met with SE Williamson to describe how they had been forced to leave their homes by the fighting in May. Although the Misseriya militias initiated attacks on the SPLA, the SAF had reinforced them heavily. They described how the SAF had recruited militias to attack and kill civilians, and how the looting of Abyei town had occurred under the supervision of the SAF. The Ngok Dinka of Abyei had lost all of their possessions in the looting that followed the conflict. Entire families had fled the town on foot, and Abyei town is now entirely looted and burned.

Comment  
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¶10. (C) The situation in Abyei was cautiously hopeful with the JIU beginning to work and the interim administration just announced. There remain tremendous material and logistical challenges and there is an urgent need for ratcheting up support for the JIU and JIPU, for the interim administration, and for a beefed up and empowered UNMIS force.

¶11. (U) SE Williamson cleared this cable prior to his departure.  
FERNANDEZ